

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA
HAMMOND DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
v.)	
)	Cause No. 2:24-cv-260
\$35,990.00 in United States Currency,)	
)	
Defendant.)	

VERIFIED COMPLAINT IN REM

Comes now, United States of America ("United States"), the plaintiff herein, by its attorney, Clifford D. Johnson, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana, through Madison Lo Dolce, Assistant United States Attorney, and brings this Verified Complaint in Rem, in accordance with Supplemental Rule G(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, and alleges as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This is an action to forfeit and condemn to the use and benefit of the United States of America, pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6), United States currency ("USC") in the amount \$35,990.00 (hereinafter referred to as "Defendant Property"), for violations of 21 U.S.C. § 841.

THE DEFENDANT IN REM

2. The Defendant property was seized on December 19, 2023, from Arturo Saucedo-Saucedo in Michigan City, Laporte County, Indiana. The Defendant property is currently in the custody of the United States of America's Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") in Merrillville, Indiana.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

3. The United States brings this action *in rem* in its own right to forfeit and condemn the Defendant Property. This Court has jurisdiction over an action commenced by the United States under 28 U.S.C. § 1345, and over an action for forfeiture under 28 U.S.C. § 1355(a).

4. This Court has both *in rem* and subject matter jurisdiction over the Defendant Property under 28 U.S.C. § 1355(b).

5. Venue is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1395(b), because the Defendant Property was found within this district.

BASIS FOR FORFEITURE

6. The Defendant Property is subject to forfeiture pursuant to 21 U.S.C. § 881(a)(6), because it constitutes money furnished or intended to be furnished in exchange for a controlled substance in violation of the Controlled Substances Act.

FACTS

7. On December 19, 2023, at approximately 12:20 p.m., a law enforcement officer conducted a traffic stop for a traffic violation on Interstate 94 near mile marker 35 in Michigan City, Laporte County, Indiana. The vehicle was driven by Arturo Saucedo-Saucedo (“Saucedo”). An additional occupant, Ricardo Soto (“Soto”), was riding as a passenger in the vehicle.

8. The officer informed Saucedo of the reason for the stop and explained that he would be issuing a warning for the traffic violation. The officer asked Saucedo to accompany him to his patrol car while he checked Saucedo’s license and registration.

9. In response to questioning, Saucedo gave contradictory information regarding the purpose of his travels. When asked whether there was any illegal contraband in the vehicle, including narcotics, guns, or USC, Saucedo denied the existence of such. Saucedo also denied the officer’s request to conduct a consent search of the vehicle.

10. A canine was then employed to conduct a free air sniff of the vehicle. The canine displayed a positive indication to narcotic odor emanating from the vehicle.

11. As a result, the officer conducted a probable cause search of the vehicle. During the search, the officer located, and seized, a multi-colored

lunch box under the driver's seat which contained a large number of rubber-banded bundles of USC. The USC was later counted and found to total \$35,990.00.

12. After being advised of their Miranda Rights, both Saucedo and Soto denied ownership of the USC. Rather, Saucedo stated that it belonged to his parents.

13. Thereafter, Saucedo consented to law enforcement searching his cell phone. The search uncovered photos and videos depicting large amounts of marijuana and plastic baggies containing marijuana, consistent with the way in which street-level marijuana dealers package marijuana. The officer seized the phone in anticipation of receiving a search warrant for further analysis of the phone.

14. Saucedo and Soto were released from the scene with no charges.

15. On January 16, 2024, a federal magistrate judge in the Northern District of Indiana issued a search warrant for the phone. Thereafter, further analysis of the phone was conducted which revealed messages sent by Saucedo admitting to selling marijuana and marijuana products. Other messages on the phone, involving Saucedo, were found to be advertising bulk marijuana.

16. A turnover order was obtained on January 4, 2024, transferring the property to federal custody.

WHEREFORE, the plaintiff requests that the Defendant Property be forfeited and condemned to the United States of America; that Warrant of Arrest In Rem be issued for the Defendant Property; that the plaintiff be awarded its costs and disbursements in this action; and for such other relief this court deems proper and just.

Respectfully submitted,

CLIFFORD D. JOHNSON
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

By: /S/ Madison Lo Dolce
Madison Lo Dolce
Assistant U.S. Attorney
5400 Federal Plaza, Suite 1500
Hammond, Indiana 46320
(219)937-5515; fax: (219) 937-5550
[email:madison.lodolce@usdoj.gov](mailto:madison.lodolce@usdoj.gov)

Verification

I, Timothy R. Dernulc, hereby verify and declare under penalty of perjury that I am a Task Force Officer with the Drug Enforcement Administration in Merrillville, Indiana, that I have read the foregoing Verified Complaint for Civil Forfeiture *in rem* and know the contents thereof, and that the factual matters contained in paragraphs 7 through 16 of the Verified Complaint are true to my own knowledge.

The sources of my knowledge and information are the official files and records of the United States, information supplied to me by other law enforcement officers, as well as my investigation of this case, together with others, as a Task Force Officer with the Drug Enforcement Administration.

I hereby verify and declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Date: 7/23/2024

/s/ Timothy R. Dernulc
Timothy R. Dernulc
Task Force Officer
Drug Enforcement Administration

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on July 26, 2024, the attorney for the Defendant filed the Verified Complaint in Rem. I further certify that on July 26, 2024, a copy of this document was sent by first-class certified mail to *pro se* Plaintiff, a non-CM/ECF participant:

Arturo Saucedo
331 First Avenue
Pontiac, MI 48340

/s/ Madison Lo Dolce
MADISON LO DOLCE
Assistant U.S. Attorney

U.S. Attorney's Office
Northern District of Indiana
5400 Federal Plaza, Suite 1500
Hammond, IN 46320